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(54) **PNEUMATICALLY-EXPANDABLE CABLE
TRACK FOR SCANNING HEAD OF PAPER
MACHINE OR OTHER SYSTEM**

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B65G 23/44	(2006.01)
H01B 17/36	(2006.01)

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H01B 17/36; H01B 7/08
USPC 174/117 AS, 113 AS, 117 F; 59/78.1;
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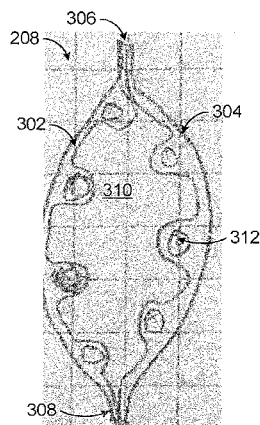
See application file for complete search history.

Primary Examiner — Dion R Ferguson

(57) **ABSTRACT**

An apparatus includes a cable track configured to be coupled to a moveable object and to be pushed and pulled by the moveable object without buckling. The cable track is configured to transport at least one signal or material to or from the moveable object. The cable track has a fluid compartment defined between walls of the cable track. The walls of the cable track are configured to be separated when fluid is inserted into the fluid compartment and to approach one another in a bent portion of the cable track. The cable track may further include a web coupled to the walls, where the web is configured to limit the separation of the walls.

20 Claims, 5 Drawing Sheets



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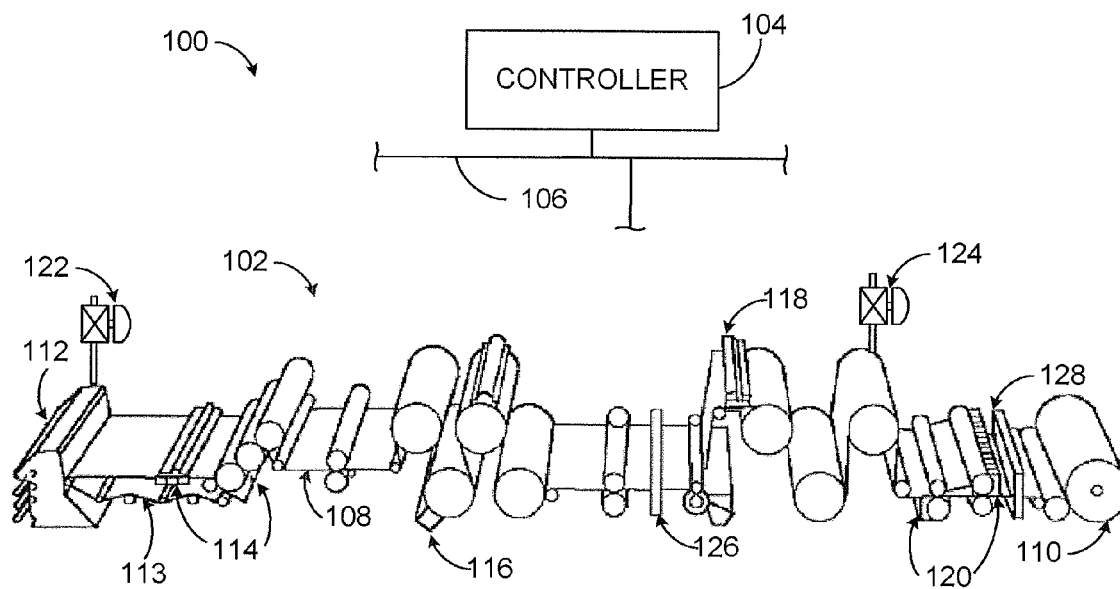


FIGURE 1

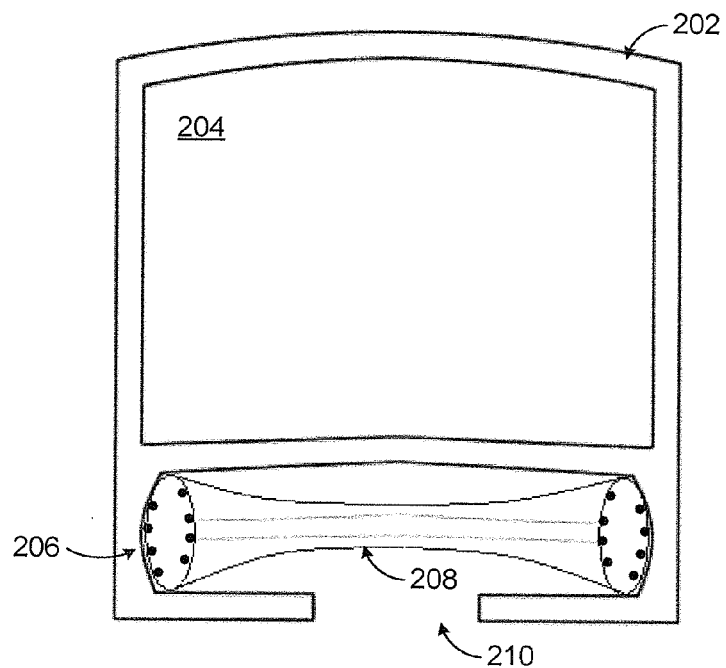


FIGURE 2

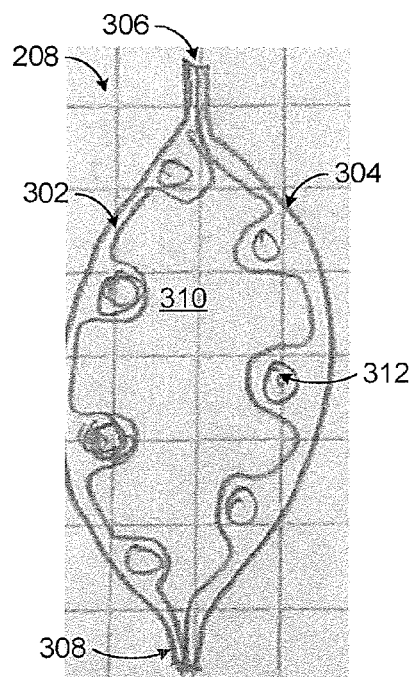


FIGURE 3A

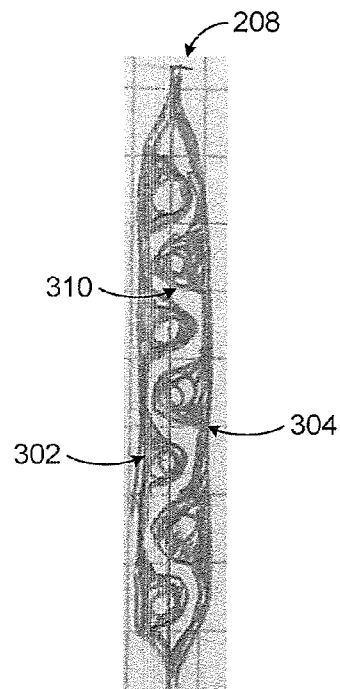


FIGURE 3B

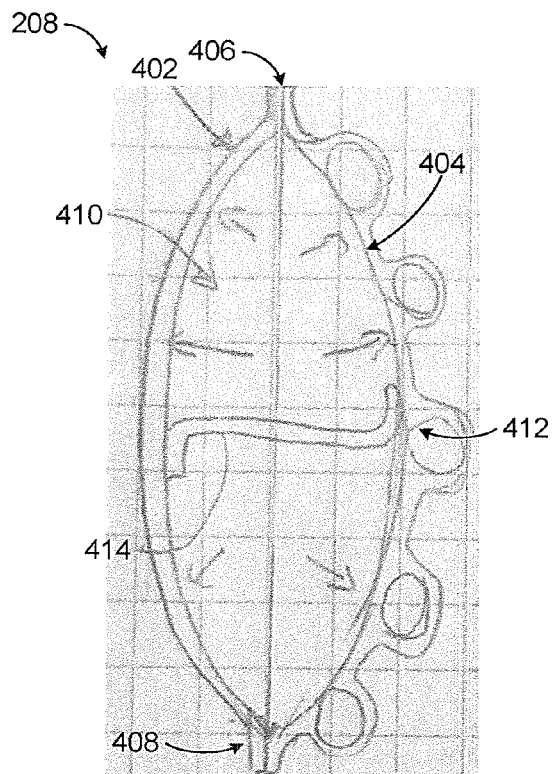


FIGURE 4A

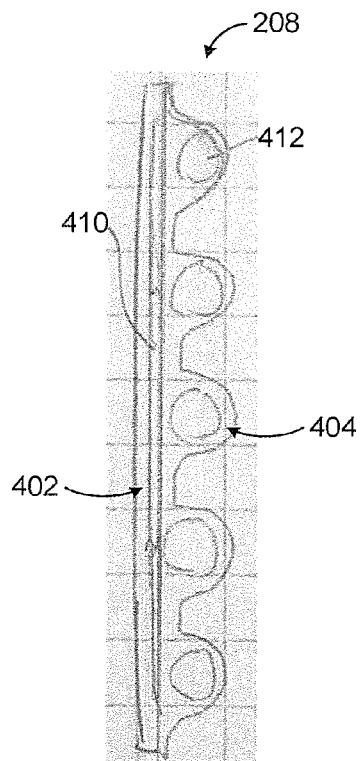
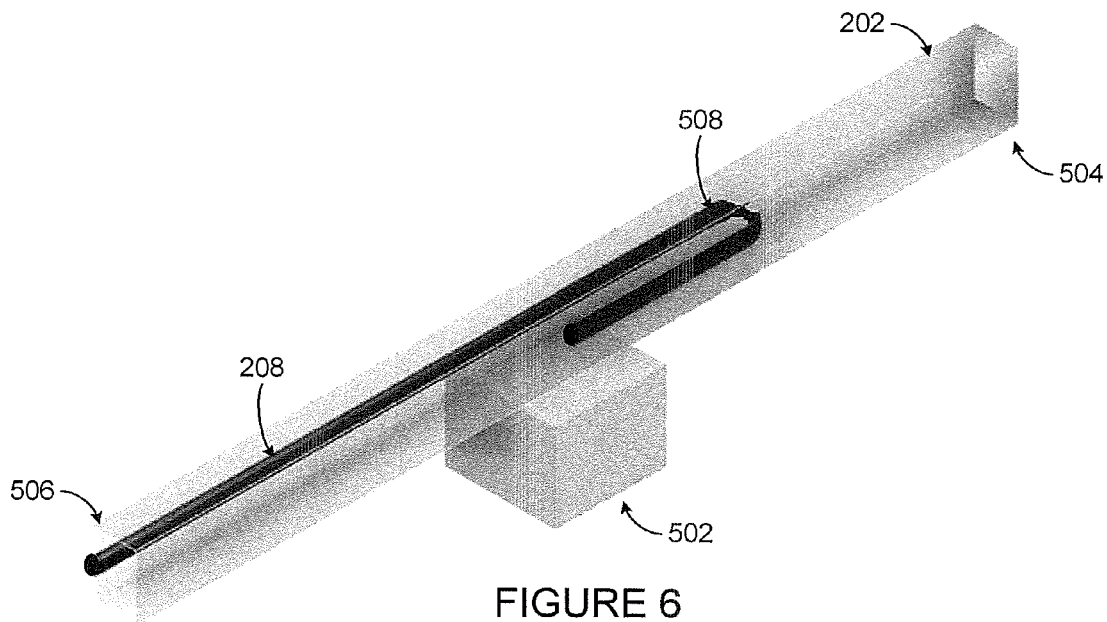
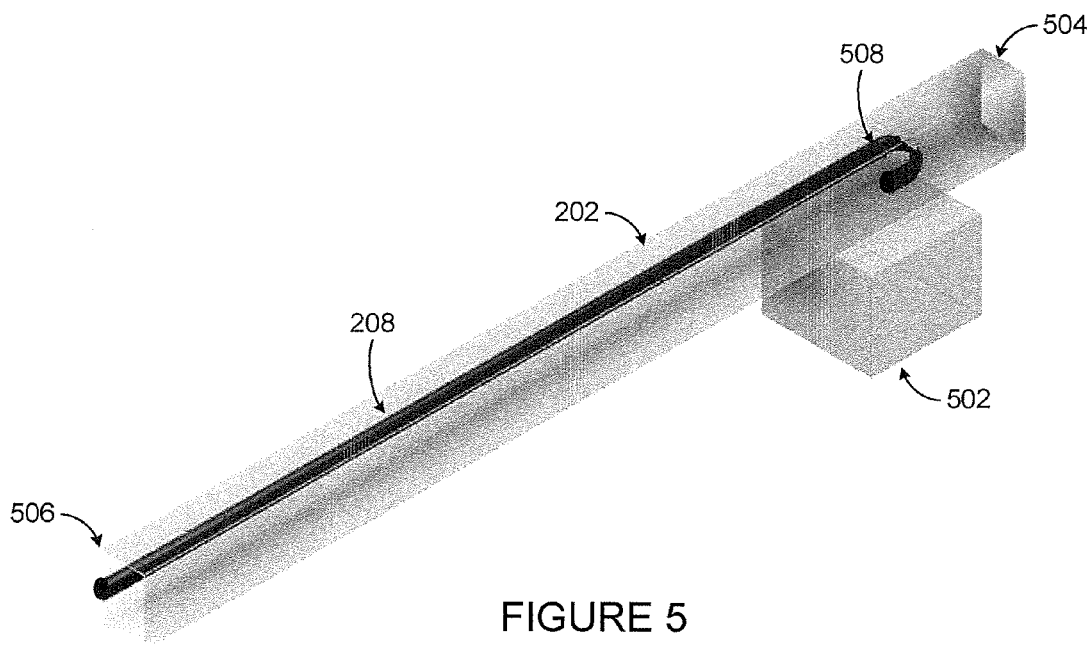
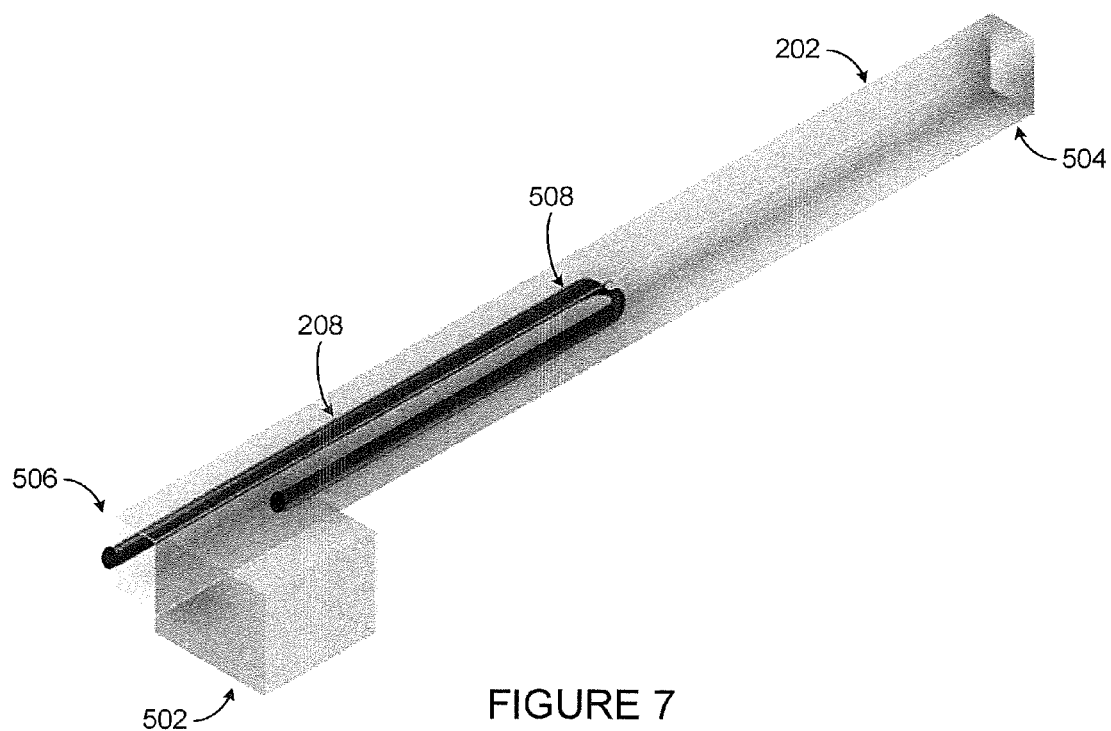


FIGURE 4B





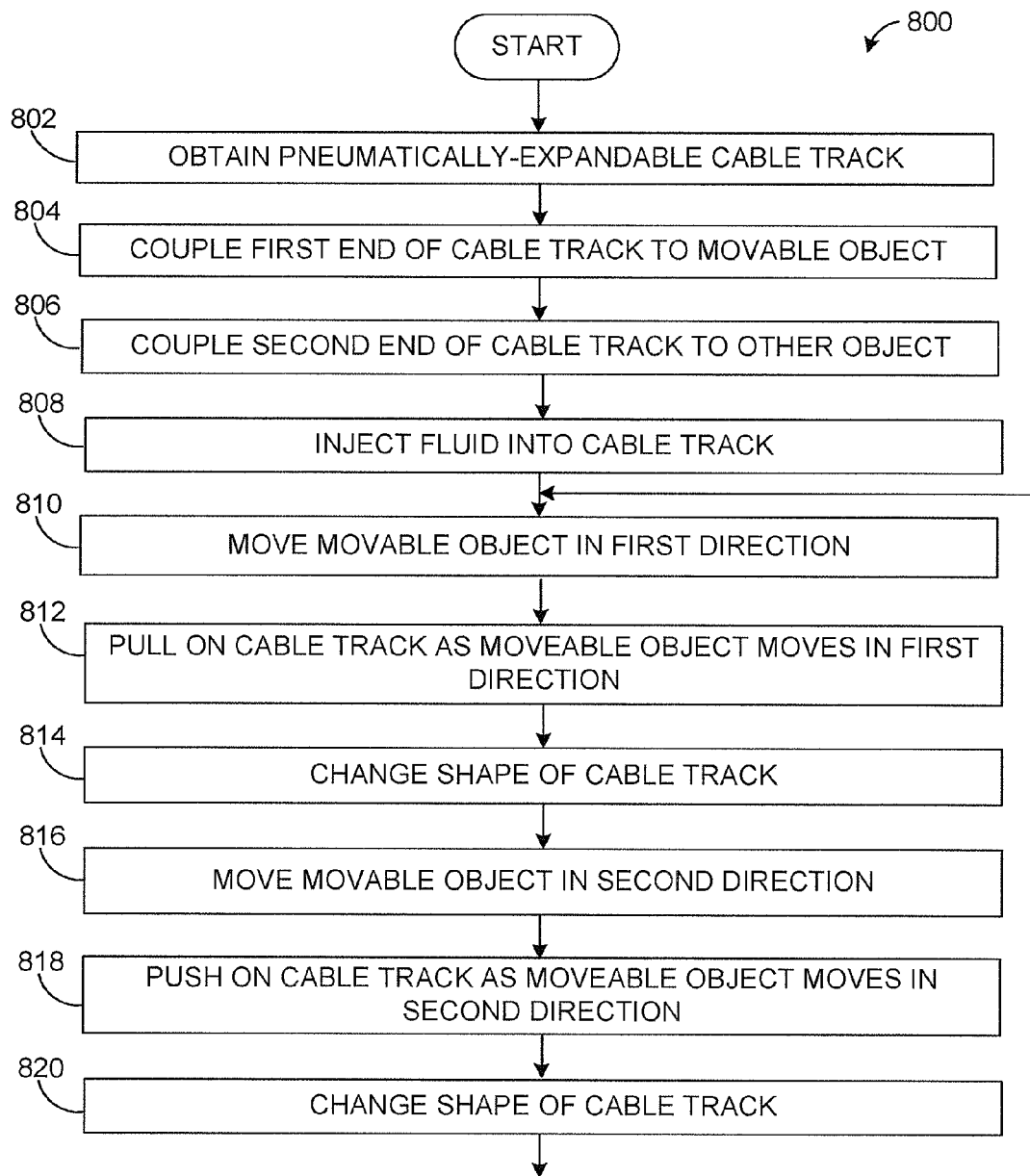


FIGURE 8

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PNEUMATICALLY-EXPANDABLE CABLE TRACK FOR SCANNING HEAD OF PAPER MACHINE OR OTHER SYSTEM

TECHNICAL FIELD

This disclosure relates generally to scanning systems. More specifically, this disclosure relates to a pneumatically-expandable cable track for a scanning head of a paper machine or other system.

BACKGROUND

Webs or other sheets of material are used in a variety of industries and in a variety of ways. These materials can include paper, multi-layer paperboard, and other products manufactured or processed in long sheets. As a particular example, long sheets of paper can be manufactured and collected in reels.

It is often necessary or desirable to measure one or more properties of a sheet of material as the sheet is being manufactured or processed. Adjustments can then be made to the process in order to help ensure that the properties stay within desired ranges. Measurements are often taken using a scanning head that moves back and forth across the width of the sheet. Scanning heads are typically connected to external systems through cable tracks having wires and optionally fluid for the scanning heads. These cable tracks often need to be flexible in at least one direction so that the cable tracks can bend without suffering from fatigue stresses.

When a scanning head moves a relatively short distance, the stiffness of a cable track itself often allows the cable track to be pushed and pulled without the need for a carrier linkage exoskeleton. When a longer cable track is needed, the cable track often cannot be both (i) stiff enough to be pushed without buckling and (ii) flexible enough to allow compact bending. In these situations, a cable track is often placed within a linkage carrier that is designed to resist reverse bending and to provide stiffness so the cable track can be predictably pushed over long distances. However, these linkage carriers add cost, assembly complexity, size, weight, noise, vibration, speed limit, and failure points to the overall system.

SUMMARY

This disclosure provides a pneumatically-expandable cable track for a scanning head of a paper machine or other system.

In a first embodiment, an apparatus includes a cable track configured to be coupled to a moveable object and to be pushed and pulled by the movable object without buckling. The cable track is configured to transport at least one signal or material to or from the moveable object. The cable track has a fluid compartment defined between walls of the cable track. The walls of the cable track are configured to be separated when fluid is inserted into the fluid compartment and to approach one another in a bent portion of the cable track.

In a second embodiment, a system includes a movable object configured to move back and forth and a cable track coupled to the moveable object. The cable track is configured to transport at least one signal or material to or from the moveable object. The cable track has a fluid compartment defined between walls of the cable track. The movable object is configured to push and pull the cable track without buckling the cable track. The walls of the cable track are configured to

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be separated when fluid is inserted into the fluid compartment and to approach one another in a bent portion of the cable track.

In a third embodiment, a method includes coupling a cable track to a moveable object. The cable track is configured to transport at least one signal or material to or from the moveable object. The method also includes inserting fluid into a fluid compartment defined between walls of the cable track. In addition, the method includes pushing and pulling the cable track with the moveable object without buckling the cable track. The walls of the cable track separate when the fluid is inserted into the fluid compartment and approach one another in a bent portion of the cable track.

Other technical features may be readily apparent to one skilled in the art from the following figures, descriptions, and claims.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

For a more complete understanding of this disclosure, reference is now made to the following description, taken in conjunction with the accompanying drawings, in which:

FIG. 1 illustrates an example sheet manufacturing or processing system according to this disclosure;

FIGS. 2 through 4B illustrate details of example pneumatically-expandable cable tracks used with a scanning head or other movable object according to this disclosure;

FIGS. 5 through 7 illustrate example operations of a pneumatically-expandable cable track used with a scanning head or other movable object according to this disclosure; and

FIG. 8 illustrates an example method for using a pneumatically-expandable cable track with a scanning head or other movable object according to this disclosure.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

FIGS. 1 through 8, discussed below, and the various embodiments used to describe the principles of the present invention in this patent document are by way of illustration only and should not be construed in any way to limit the scope of the invention. Those skilled in the art will understand that the principles of the invention may be implemented in any type of suitably arranged device or system.

FIG. 1 illustrates an example sheet manufacturing or processing system 100 according to this disclosure. In this example, the system 100 includes a paper machine 102, a controller 104, and a network 106. The paper machine 102 includes various components used to produce a paper product, namely a paper sheet 108 that is collected at a reel 110. The controller 104 monitors and controls the operation of the paper machine 102, which may help to maintain or increase the quality of the paper sheet 108 produced by the paper machine 102.

In this example, the paper machine 102 includes at least one headbox 112, which distributes a pulp suspension uniformly across the machine onto a continuous moving wire screen or mesh 113. The pulp suspension entering the headbox 112 may contain, for example, 0.2-3% wood fibers, fillers, and/or other materials, with the remainder of the suspension being water. The headbox 112 may include an array of dilution actuators, which distributes dilution water into the pulp suspension across the sheet. The dilution water may be used to help ensure that the resulting paper sheet 108 has a more uniform basis weight across the sheet 108.

Arrays of drainage elements 114, such as vacuum boxes, remove as much water as possible to initiate the formation of the sheet 108. An array of steam actuators 116 produces hot

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steam that penetrates the paper sheet **108** and releases the latent heat of the steam into the paper sheet **108**, thereby increasing the temperature of the paper sheet **108** in sections across the sheet. The increase in temperature may allow for easier removal of remaining water from the paper sheet **108**. An array of rewet shower actuators **118** adds small droplets of water (which may be air atomized) onto the surface of the paper sheet **108**. The array of rewet shower actuators **118** may be used to control the moisture profile of the paper sheet **108**, reduce or prevent over-drying of the paper sheet **108**, or correct any dry streaks in the paper sheet **108**.

The paper sheet **108** is then often passed through a calender having several nips of counter-rotating rolls. Arrays of induction heating actuators **120** heat the shell surfaces of various ones of these rolls. As each roll surface locally heats up, the roll diameter is locally expanded and hence increases nip pressure, which in turn locally compresses the paper sheet **108**. The arrays of induction heating actuators **120** may therefore be used to control the caliper (thickness) profile of the paper sheet **108**. The nips of a calender may also be equipped with other actuator arrays, such as arrays of air showers or steam showers, which may be used to control the gloss profile or smoothness profile of the paper sheet.

Two additional actuators **122-124** are shown in FIG. 1. A thick stock flow actuator **122** controls the consistency of incoming stock received at the headbox **112**. A steam flow actuator **124** controls the amount of heat transferred to the paper sheet **108** from drying cylinders. The actuators **122-124** could, for example, represent valves controlling the flow of stock and steam, respectively. These actuators **122-124** may be used for controlling the dry weight and moisture of the paper sheet **108**.

Additional components could be used to further process the paper sheet **108**, such as a supercalender (for improving the paper sheet's thickness, smoothness, and gloss) or one or more coating stations (each applying a layer of coating to a surface of the paper to improve the smoothness and printability of the paper sheet). Similarly, additional flow actuators may be used to control the proportions of different types of pulp and filler material in the thick stock and to control the amounts of various additives (such as retention aid or dyes) that are mixed into the stock.

This represents a brief description of one type of paper machine **102** that may be used to produce a paper product. Additional details regarding this type of paper machine **102** are well-known in the art and are not needed for an understanding of this disclosure. Also, this represents one specific type of paper machine **102** that may be used in the system **100**. Other machines or devices could be used that include any other or additional components for producing a paper product. In addition, the control system described below is not limited to use with systems for producing paper products and could be used with systems that process a paper product or with systems that produce or process other items or materials (such as multi-layer paperboard, cardboard, plastic, textiles, metal webs, or other or additional materials that are manufactured or processed as moving sheets).

In order to control the paper-making process, one or more properties of the paper sheet **108** may be continuously or repeatedly measured. The sheet properties can be measured at one or various stages in the manufacturing process. This information may then be used to adjust the paper machine **102**, such as by adjusting various actuators within the paper machine **102**. This may help to compensate for any variations of the sheet properties from desired targets, which may help to ensure the quality of the sheet **108**.

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As shown in FIG. 1, the paper machine **102** includes one or more scanners **126-128**, each of which may include one or more sensors. Each scanner **126-128** is capable of measuring one or more characteristics of the paper sheet **108**. For example, each scanner **126-128** could include sensors for measuring the caliper, anisotropy, basis weight, color, gloss, sheen, haze, surface features (such as roughness, topography, or orientation distributions of surface features), or any other or additional characteristics of the paper sheet **108**.

Each scanner **126-128** includes any suitable structure or structures for measuring or detecting one or more characteristics of the paper sheet **108**. For example, each scanner **126-128** could include one or more sets of sensors mounted on a scanning head that moves back and forth across the sheet **108**. Note, however, that stationary sensors could also be used at one or more locations of the paper machine **102**.

The controller **104** receives measurement data from the scanners **126-128** and uses the data to control the paper machine **102**. For example, the controller **104** may use the measurement data to adjust any of the actuators or other components of the paper machine **102**. The controller **104** includes any suitable structure for controlling the operation of at least part of the paper machine **102**, such as a computing device.

The network **106** is coupled to the controller **104** and various components of the paper machine **102** (such as the actuators and scanners). The network **106** facilitates communication between components of the system **100**. The network **106** represents any suitable network or combination of networks facilitating communication between components in the system **100**. The network **106** could, for example, represent a wired or wireless Ethernet network, an electrical signal network (such as a HART or FOUNDATION FIELDBUS network), a pneumatic control signal network, or any other or additional network(s).

As described in more detail below, one or more scanners **126-128** could include a cable track connected to a scanning head. The cable track is pneumatically expandable, meaning the cable track can expand in cross-sectional size when a fluid (such as liquid or gas) is placed within the cable track. However, the cable track can return to a flatter shape in the U-shaped portion of the cable track when the cable track is bent. The pneumatic expansion increases the stiffness of the cable track when the cable track is being pushed, and the ability to return to a flatter shape helps to provide compact bending. This allows the cable track to be pulled and pushed repeatedly in a compact space as a scanning head moves back and forth, without requiring the use of carrier linkage exoskeletons or other support structures. This helps to avoid the problems associated with conventional cable track designs.

Although FIG. 1 illustrates one example of a sheet manufacturing or processing system **100**, various changes may be made to FIG. 1. For example, other systems could be used to produce other paper or non-paper products. Also, while shown as including a single paper machine **102** with various components and a single controller **104**, the system **100** could include any number of paper machines or other machinery having any suitable structure, and the system **100** could include any number of controllers. In addition, FIG. 1 illustrates one operational environment in which a pneumatically-expandable cable track can be used. This functionality could be used in any other type of system, and that system need not manufacture or process moving webs or sheets.

FIGS. 2 through 4B illustrate details of example pneumatically-expandable cable tracks used with a scanning head or other movable object according to this disclosure. FIG. 2 illustrates a cross-section of a structure **200** that supports the

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use of a cable track. The structure **200** itself could represent an elongated structure that extends any suitable distance, such as the distance across a paper machine **102**. In particular embodiments, the structure **200** could form part of one or both scanners **126-128** in the system **100** of FIG. 1.

As shown in FIG. 2, the structure **200** includes a housing **202**, which defines an opening **204**. The housing **202** is designed to receive a beam or other support through the opening **204**. The beam could, for example, represent a beam extending across the upper surface of the sheet **108** in the system **100**. By placing the structure **200** onto this beam, the structure **200** is secured in place over the sheet **108**.

The structure **200** also defines a second opening **206** below the opening **204**. The second opening **206** represents an area where a cable track **208** can be inserted. The cable track **208** represents a structure containing, encasing, or otherwise supporting one or multiple wires, tubes, hoses, or other structures for transporting signals or materials to or from a scanning head or other movable object. The cable track **208** here extends along one side of the opening **206** and then loops back at a “U” bend and extends along another side of the opening **206**. The cable track **208** also flattens along the “U” bend.

The housing **202** can be formed from any suitable material(s), such as one or more metals. The housing **202** can also be formed in any suitable manner, such as an extrusion process. In addition, the housing **202** can have any suitable size, shape, and dimensions. The opening **204** can have any suitable size and shape in the housing. The opening **206** can also have any suitable size and shape in the housing.

An opening **210** is provided along the bottom of the housing **202**. The opening **210** allows the cable track **208** to exit the opening **206** and couple to a scanning head or other movable object. The movable object could be mounted to or under the housing **202**. The opening **210** could have any suitable size and shape. Also, the opening **210** may or may not extend the entire length of the structure **200**. In addition, while the opening **210** is shown here as being centered in the cross-section of the structure **200**, the opening **210** could be offset to one side or the other in FIG. 2.

As shown in this example, the cable track **208** has an expanded profile or cross-section along the sides of the opening **206** and a flatter profile or cross-section along the “U” bend of the cable track **208**. The expanded profile or cross-section can be obtained by placing a fluid (such as liquid or gas) within the cable track **208**, possibly under pressure. The flatter profile or cross-section can be obtained when the walls of the cable track **208** push the fluid out of that portion of the cable track **208**. Note that the exact forms shown in FIG. 2 are for illustration only. The cable track **208** need not have an elliptical profile or cross-section in its expanded areas, and the profile or cross-section of the cable track **208** in the flattened region could vary.

Example embodiments of the cable track **208** are shown in greater detail in FIGS. 3A through 4B. As shown in FIGS. 3A and 3B, the cable track **208** includes two walls **302-304**, which are sealed together along their outer edges **306-308** (although other portions of the walls **302-304** could be sealed together). This creates a fluid compartment **310** between the walls **302-304** as shown in FIG. 3A. The fluid compartment **310** can receive a fluid that pushes the walls **302-304** apart. The cable track **208** can therefore be pneumatically expanded by placing fluid into the compartment **310**.

Each wall **302-304** can be formed from any suitable material(s) and in any suitable manner. For example, each wall **302-304** could be formed from a polymer such as polyurethane or polytetrafluoroethylene (PTFE) or from a reinforced fabric. Also, the walls **302-304** can be sealed together in any

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suitable manner. For instance, if the walls **302-304** are fabricated as separate pieces, the walls **302-304** can be heat-welded together. If the walls **302-304** are formed by folding a single piece of material, the walls **302-304** could be heat-welded along a single edge. The walls **302-304** could also be formed as a single integral unit, such as by an extrusion process that creates the walls **302-304** directly around wires or other components. In this case, a separate operation for sealing the walls **302-304** together may not be needed.

The fluid compartment **310** can have any suitable size and shape, which are defined in part on the relative shapes and sizes of the walls **302-304**. For instance, if each wall **302-304** is equal in height, the fluid compartment **310** could assume an elliptical or almost circular shape. If the walls **302-304** are unequal in height, the fluid compartment **310** could assume an irregular shape. In general, the cable track **208** could have any suitable cross-sectional shape that can resist bending when being pushed.

Each wall **302-304** in this example includes one or more pods **312**, each of which can be used to transport signals or materials to or from a movable object. For example, wires or wire bundles in the pods **312** can be used to provide signals to and receive signals from a scanning head. As particular examples, wires or wire bundles could be used to supply electrical power and control commands or other data to the scanning head. The wires or wire bundles could also be used to receive measurements and other data from the scanning head. The cable track **208** could include any number of pods **312**, and each pod **312** could include any number of wires or wire bundles.

Note that the pods **312** are not limited to simply containing wires. For example, the pods **312** could include one or more hoses, tubes, or other structures configured to transport air, water, or other fluid(s) to or from the scanning head. The pods **312** could also include reinforcing members such as fiberglass, spring metal rods, or other support structures for providing stiffness to the cable track **208**. In general, the phrase “cable track” encompasses any suitable track that can transport at least one signal or material to or from a movable object.

Also note that the pods **312** in this example are within both walls **302-304** of the cable track **208**. However, pods **312** could be used in only one of the walls **302** or **304**. In addition, note that the pods **312** in this example are embedded within the walls **302-304** of the cable track **208**. However, other arrangements could also be used. For example, wires, hoses, tubes, or other structures could be secured to the outer and/or inner surface(s) of one or both walls **302-304**. A combination of structures fully or partially embedded or contained within one or more walls **302-304** and structures mounted to the surface(s) of one or more walls **302-304** could also be used.

As described above, a portion of the cable track **208** can rotate and flatten when bent, such as in the “U” shaped portion of the cable track **208**. This flattening forces fluid out of the compartment **310** and collapses the cable track **208**. An example of this is shown in FIG. 3B, where the walls **302-304** have collapsed towards each other and the fluid compartment **310** is much narrower. As can be seen here, the pods **312** in the walls **302-304** are interlaced, and the pods **312** collapse along a neutral axis of the cable track **208**. This helps to provide more even bend stresses on the pods **312** by reducing the difference between the inside and outside bend radii of the cable track **208**.

As shown in FIGS. 4A and 4B, the cable track **208** includes two walls **402-404** sealed together along their edges **406-408** to create a fluid compartment **410**. As shown in FIG. 4A, the fluid compartment **410** can receive a fluid that pushes the

walls **402-404** apart. The cable track **208** can therefore be pneumatically expanded by placing fluid into the compartment **410**.

Each wall **402-404** can be formed from any suitable material(s) and in any suitable manner. Example materials and techniques are described above with respect to the walls **302-304**. Also, the fluid compartment **410** can have any suitable size and shape, which are defined in part on the relative shapes and sizes of the walls **402-404**. In general, the cable track **208** could have any suitable cross-sectional shape that can resist bending when being pushed. A single wall **404** in this example includes one or more pods **412**, each of which can include one or more wires, hoses, tubes, reinforcing members, or other structures. The other wall **402** here does not contain any pods.

Once again, note that the pods **412** in this example are embedded within the wall **404** of the cable track **208**. However, other arrangements could also be used. For example, wires, hoses, tubes, or other structures could be secured to the outer and/or inner surface(s) of the wall **404**. A combination of structures fully or partially embedded or contained within the wall **404** and structures mounted to the surface(s) of the wall **404** could also be used.

As described above, the cable track **208** can rotate and flatten when bent, such as in the “U” shaped portion of the cable track **208**. This flattening forces fluid out of the compartment **410** and collapses the cable track **208**. An example of this is shown in FIG. **4B**, where the walls **402-404** have collapsed towards each other and the fluid compartment **410** is much smaller. As can be seen here, the pods **412** in the wall **404** collapse along a neutral axis of the cable track **208**. This helps to provide more even bend stresses on the pods **412**.

In this example, one or more webs **414** can be used to limit the expansion of the cable track **208**. For example, each web **414** can be coupled to both walls **402-404** of the cable track **208**. When the walls **402-404** are close to each other, the web **414** can hang loosely from the walls. When the walls **402-404** move away from each other, the web **414** can be pulled tight and prevent further movement of the walls **402-404** away from each other. This can help to maintain a desired shape of the cable track **208**. Each web **414** includes any suitable structure for limiting movement in a cable track. Although not shown, one or more webs **414** can also be used in the cable track **208** of FIGS. **3A** and **3B**. Each web **414** can be formed from any suitable material(s) and in any suitable manner. Each web **414** can also be secured to the walls of a cable track in any suitable manner.

The height, width, and curvature(s) of each cable track **208** and the pressure of the fluid within each cable track **208** could be varied to obtain the desired flexibility and stiffness of the cable track for a given application. Surface and wear features can also be added to each cable track **208**. A wear surface could be placed along any portion of the cable track that could wear against another structure.

Although FIGS. **2** through **4D** illustrate details of example pneumatically-expandable cable tracks **208** used with a scanning head or other movable object, various changes may be made to FIGS. **2** through **4D**. For example, while shown as being used within the structure **200**, the cable tracks **208** could be used with any other suitable device.

FIGS. **5** through **7** illustrate example operations of a cable track **208** used with a scanning head or other movable object according to this disclosure. In particular, FIGS. **5** through **7** illustrate a scanning head **502** moving along under the housing **202**. Note that the scanning head **502** could be mounted on the housing **202** itself or under the housing **202**.

In FIG. **5**, the scanning head **502** is positioned near a first end **504** of the housing **202**. One end of the cable track **208** can be secured to an object at or near a second end **506** of the housing **202**. The other end of the cable track **208** can be secured to the scanning head **502**. Fittings or other structures can be used to help prevent fluid leakage from the cable track **208** and to maintain fluid pressure within the cable track **208**. In this position, the cable track **208** has a “J” shape, meaning the cable track **208** extends along one side of the housing **202**, makes a “U” bend **508**, and extends a short way along the other side of the housing **202**.

In FIG. **6**, the scanning head **502** has moved approximately halfway along the housing **202**. During this movement, the scanning head **502** pulls on the cable track **208**. At this point, the cable track **208** has a shape somewhat between a “J” shape and a “U” shape. The cable track **208** still makes the “U” bend **508**, but the “U” bend **508** is now in a different location of the cable track **208**.

In FIG. **7**, the scanning head **502** has moved near the second end **506** of the housing **202**. Again, during this movement, the scanning head **502** pulls on the cable track **208**. The cable track **208** is now substantially “U” shaped. Again, the cable track **208** still makes the “U” bend **508**, but the “U” bend **508** is in a different location of the cable track **208**.

The scanning head **502** then traverses back across the housing **202** towards the first end **504** of the housing **202**. During this movement, the scanning head **502** pushes on the cable track **208**. As a result, the cable track **208** can assume the configuration shown in FIG. **6** since the scanning head **502** is pushing the cable track **208**. Eventually, the cable track **208** can assume the configuration shown in FIG. **5** when the scanning head **502** reaches the first end **504** of the housing **202**. This process can repeat any number of times as the scanning head **502** moves back and forth.

As can be seen in FIGS. **5** through **7**, the cable track **208** is able to be coupled to an object moving back and forth without requiring the use of carrier linkages or other support structures. This helps to eliminate the costs, delays, and undesirable effects associated with the use of carrier linkages. Ordinarily, the lack of carrier linkages would cause a conventional cable track to buckle when it is being pushed. The force required to buckle a column is proportional to the column’s modulus of elasticity and moment of inertia and is inversely proportional to the square of the column’s length. When used with respect to a cable track, this can be expressed as $F \propto EI/L^2$, where E represents the modulus of elasticity of the cable track, I represents the smaller of the two area moments of inertia of the cross section of the cable track, and L represents the length of the cable track. Stiffness is defined as the product of “ E ” and “ I ”.

Increasing the “ I ” value can be achieved in a number of ways, such as by altering the size and shape of the cross section of the cable track. However, increasing the stiffness of the cable track, particularly in the direction of the “U” bend, increases the natural bend radius of the cable track, thus requiring a larger area for the cable track. It could also cause excessive stresses within the cable track and ultimately lead to failure.

Using a pneumatically-expandable cable track **208** provides suitable stiffness to resist buckling while allowing the cable track **208** to flatten out around the “U” bend **508**, reducing the bend radius and temporarily reducing the “ I ” value and the associated stresses within the cable track. The cable track **208** can return to its original shape on either side of the “U” bend **508**. Moreover, separating the walls of the cable track **208** via injection of fluid into the cable track’s fluid compartment **310**, **410** separates wires and other structures

from a centerline of the cable track **208**, increasing the “I” value in the expanded portions of the cable track and allowing longer cable lengths to be pushed before buckling occurs.

Although FIGS. **5** through **7** illustrate example operations of a pneumatically-expandable cable track **208** used with a scanning head or other movable object, various changes may be made to FIGS. **5** through **7**. For example, the cable track **208** here is used in an orientation where the “U” and “J” shapes are generally horizontal within the housing **202**. However, the cable track **208** is not limited to this particular orientation. The cable track **208** could be used in an orientation where the “U” and “J” shapes are generally vertical or in any other suitable orientation.

FIG. **8** illustrates an example method **800** for using a pneumatically-expandable cable track with a scanning head or other movable object according to this disclosure. As shown in FIG. **8**, a pneumatically-expandable cable track is obtained at step **802**. This could include, for example, obtaining a cable track **208** with the appropriate number(s) and type(s) of wires or other pod contents for a desired application.

A first end of the cable track is coupled to a movable object at step **804**, a second end of the cable track is coupled to another object at step **806**, and fluid is injected into the cable track at step **808**. This could include, for example, coupling wires in the cable track **208** to a scanning head **402** or other movable object. This could also include coupling the wires in the cable track **208** to another portion of a sheet-making or sheet-processing system. This could further include injecting water, air, or other liquid or gas into the cable track **208**. The liquid or gas may or may not be injected or maintained at elevated pressure during use of the cable track **208**. Suitable fittings can be used on either end of the cable track **208** to prevent leakage of the fluid and to maintain fluid pressure within the cable track **208**.

The movable object is moved in a first direction at step **810**. This could include, for example, moving the scanning head **502** in a first direction over a sheet **108**. During this time, the movable object pulls on the cable track as the movable object moves in the first direction at step **812**, which changes the shape of the cable track at step **814**. This could include, for example, the scanning head **502** pulling on the cable track **208** to change the shape of the cable track **208** from a “J” shape to a “U” shape. This could also include the “U” bend **508** of the cable track **208** changing locations along the cable track **208**.

The movable object is moved in a second direction at step **816**. This could include, for example, moving the scanning head **502** in a second direction over the sheet **108**. During this time, the movable object pushes on the cable track as the movable object moves in the second direction at step **818**, which changes the shape of the cable track at step **820**. This could include, for example, the scanning head **502** pushing on the cable track **208** to change the shape of the cable track **208** from a “U” shape to a “J” shape. This could also include the “U” bend **508** of the cable track **208** changing locations along the cable track **208**.

Steps **810-820** can be repeated any number of times as the movable object moves back and forth repeatedly. In a paper machine **102** or other sheet-making or sheet-processing system, the scanning head **502** could move back and forth many thousands of times, possibly even hundreds of thousands or millions of times during its operational lifetime.

Although FIG. **8** illustrates one example of a method **800** for using a cable track with a scanning head or other movable object, various changes may be made to FIG. **8**. For example, while shown as a series of steps, various steps in FIG. **8** could overlap, occur in parallel, occur in a different order, or occur any number of times. As a particular example, steps **810-814**

could all occur generally at the same time, and steps **816-820** could all occur generally at the same time.

It may be advantageous to set forth definitions of certain words and phrases used throughout this patent document. The terms “include” and “comprise,” as well as derivatives thereof, mean inclusion without limitation. The term “or” is inclusive, meaning and/or. The phrase “associated with,” as well as derivatives thereof, may mean to include, be included within, interconnect with, contain, be contained within, connect to or with, couple to or with, be communicable with, cooperate with, interleave, juxtapose, be proximate to, be bound to or with, have, have a property of, have a relationship to or with, or the like. The phrase “at least one of,” when used with a list of items, means that different combinations of one or more of the listed items may be used, and only one item in the list may be needed. For example, “at least one of: A, B, and C” includes any of the following combinations: A, B, C, A and B, A and C, B and C, and A and B and C.

While this disclosure has described certain embodiments and generally associated methods, alterations and permutations of these embodiments and methods will be apparent to those skilled in the art. Accordingly, the above description of example embodiments does not define or constrain this disclosure. Other changes, substitutions, and alterations are also possible without departing from the spirit and scope of this disclosure, as defined by the following claims.

What is claimed is:

1. An apparatus comprising:

a cable track configured to be coupled to a moveable object and to be pushed and pulled by the moveable object without buckling, the cable track configured to transport at least one signal or material to or from the moveable object;

the cable track having a fluid compartment defined between walls of the cable track;

wherein the walls of the cable track are configured to be separated when fluid is inserted into the fluid compartment and to approach one another in a bent portion of the cable track.

2. The apparatus of claim **1**, wherein at least one of the walls of the cable track includes or is coupled to multiple pods, the pods configured to transport the at least one signal or material to or from the moveable object.

3. The apparatus of claim **2**, wherein the walls are configured such that the pods are substantially aligned along a neutral axis when the cable track is flattened in the bent portion of the cable track.

4. The apparatus of claim **2**, wherein multiple pods are embedded within one or more walls of the cable track.

5. The apparatus of claim **1**, wherein the cable track further comprises a web coupled to the walls, the web configured to limit the separation of the walls.

6. The apparatus of claim **1**, wherein:

the bent portion of the cable track comprises a “U” bend in the cable track; and

the cable track is configured to be pushed and pulled without buckling to change a location of the “U” bend along the cable track.

7. The apparatus of claim **1**, wherein the cable track is configured to change shape repeatedly between a “J” shape and a “U” shape.

8. The apparatus of claim **1**, further comprising:

a housing comprising first and second openings, the first opening configured to be secured to a support structure, the second opening configured to receive the cable track.

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9. A system comprising:

a movable object configured to move back and forth; and
a cable track coupled to the moveable object, the cable track configured to transport at least one signal or material to or from the moveable object, the cable track having a fluid compartment defined between walls of the cable track;

wherein the movable object is configured to push and pull the cable track without buckling the cable track; and

wherein the walls of the cable track are configured to be separated when fluid is inserted into the fluid compartment and to approach one another in a bent portion of the cable track.

10. The system of claim 9, wherein at least one of the walls of the cable track includes or is coupled to multiple pods, the pods configured to transport the at least one signal or material to or from the moveable object.

11. The system of claim 10, wherein the walls are configured such that the pods are substantially aligned along a neutral axis when the cable track is flattened in the bent portion of the cable track.

12. The system of claim 9, wherein:

the bent portion of the cable track comprises a “U” bend in the cable track; and

the cable track is configured to be pushed and pulled without buckling to change a location of the “U” bend along the cable track.

13. The system of claim 9, wherein the cable track further comprises a web coupled to the walls, the web configured to limit the separation of the walls.

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14. The system of claim 9, further comprising:

a housing comprising first and second openings, the first opening configured to be secured to a support structure, the second opening configured to receive the cable track.

15. The system of claim 9, wherein the movable object comprises a scanning head configured to measure one or more characteristics of a sheet of material.

16. A method comprising:

coupling a cable track to a moveable object, the cable track configured to transport at least one signal or material to or from the moveable object;

inserting fluid into a fluid compartment defined between walls of the cable track; and

pushing and pulling the cable track with the moveable object without buckling the cable track;

wherein the walls of the cable track separate when the fluid is inserted into the fluid compartment and approach one another in a bent portion of the cable track.

17. The method of claim 16, wherein at least one of the walls of the cable track includes or is coupled to multiple pods, the pods configured to transport the at least one signal or material to or from the moveable object.

18. The method of claim 17, wherein the walls are configured such that the pods are substantially aligned along a neutral axis when the cable track is flattened in the bent portion of the cable track.

19. The method of claim 16, wherein the cable track further comprises a web coupled to the walls, the web limiting the separation of the walls.

20. The method of claim 16, wherein:

the movable object comprises a scanning head; and
the method further comprises measuring one or more characteristics of a sheet of material using the scanning head.

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